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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 16, 2008

## \$9 MILLION SUPPLEMENTAL STATE FUNDING FOR LEGAL SERVICES EASES FUNDING CRISIS

EDISON—Responding to Governor Corzine's announcement today that the State will provide an additional \$9 million for Legal Services during the current fiscal year, Melville D. Miller, Jr., president of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), said "LSNJ, on behalf of New Jersey's lowest-income people, would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Governor for recognizing the critical and urgent plight of the state's Legal Services programs, as we face a \$25 million drop in our principal funding source, the IOLTA Fund. This supplemental funding will address the first phase of our funding crisis, enabling the state's system for providing free civil legal help to low-income people to maintain the current level of service through the end of the state fiscal year next June."

"More broadly," Miller added, "we applaud the Governor for addressing the tremendous challenges facing low-income people in so many areas,

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allocating resources that will help keep families in their homes, put food on the table, and heat their homes during the winter ahead. In crafting a comprehensive response to the current fiscal crisis, he has demonstrated leadership and vision, not losing sight of the basic human needs of the people who are hurt the most by it.”

Miller stressed that “even this most welcome emergency supplemental funding will not be sufficient, in the long term, to solve the problems caused by the precipitous decline in IOLTA revenues. We will face an additional shortfall of at least \$14 million in the next state fiscal year, which will begin July 1, 2009.”

Legal Services programs provide essential legal aid—and access to the judicial system to resolve disputes—to people who cannot afford legal counsel for their civil legal problems, operating through a network of six regional Legal Services programs and LSNJ, the statewide coordinating office. More than 63,000 clients were served last year – and tens of thousands more were helped through self-help publications and the LSNJ Web site – on a total statewide budget of just over \$70 million.

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